COMMUNITIES THAT CARE

A Guide for Developing Services for Children

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To the memory of Helen Farabee,
whose leadership, understanding,
commitment, and guidance set a
model for improving human services
for Texans of all ages

This booklet is published by the Hogg Foundation's Commission on the Mental Health of Children and Families as a part of its effort to promote mental health and prevent later emotional and social problems of Texas children and their families.

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Communities That Care

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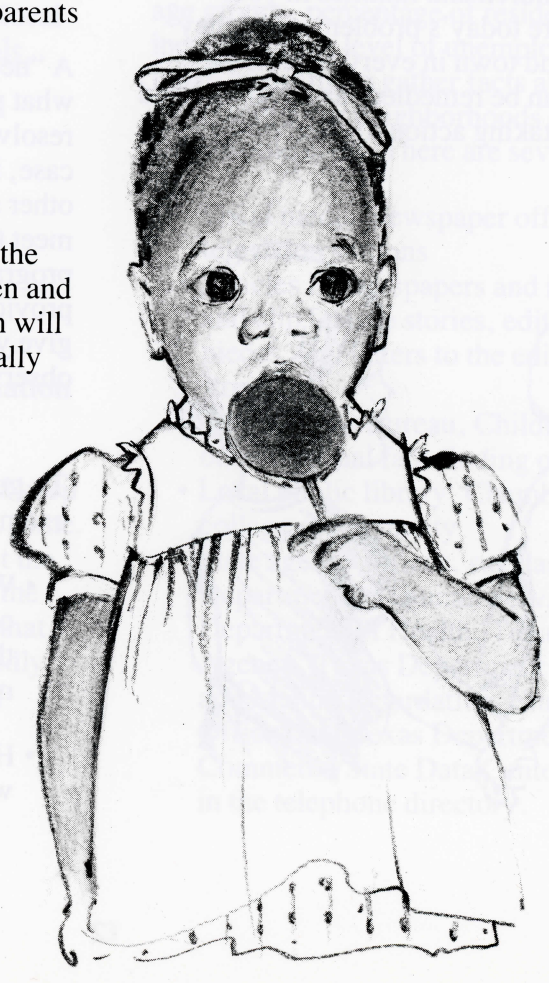
Who cares for children? The traditional answer, of course, is that parents do. But with the rapid increase in the number of mothers in the workplace, of single parents, and of children living in poverty, the answer becomes blurred and the question becomes urgent.

- Who cares for infants and toddlers when their parents are at work, and for school-age youngsters after school and in the summer?
- Who cares for children when they're sick or in need of special care?
- Who cares for the children of young parents who are taking job-training courses or of teen parents who should be attending high school?
- Who cares for children in poverty, the homeless, those most at risk?
- Who cares for these children? Who is responsible for them? And what role does the community play in helping today's children and families in need so that the next generation will have a greater chance of growing up mentally and physically healthy?

In towns and neighborhoods and rural areas across Texas, concerned citizens are working together on behalf of their youngest citizens. Communities can—and do—make a difference. You and your community can do it too.

This booklet is designed to guide you in addressing the needs of the children and families in your community. Every setting is special in its own way, and each has its own particular problems as well as its ways of handling them. But there are some basic steps that you, as a concerned citizen, can follow, wherever you live, to unite your community in serving its own children and their families.

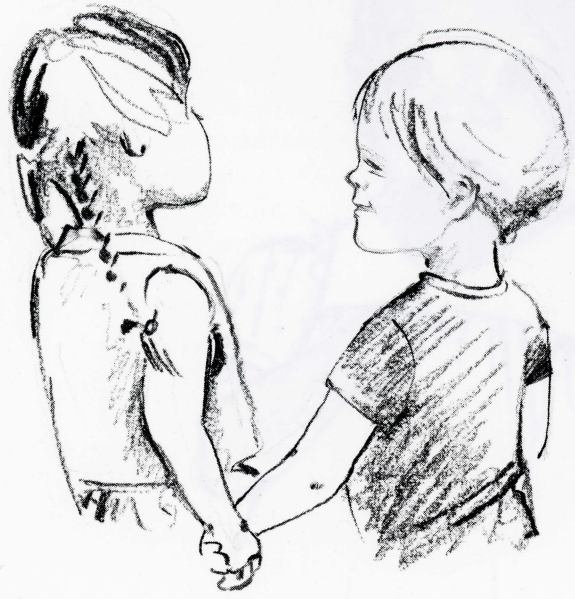


Getting Started

When you went to the drugstore the other afternoon, did you notice the youngsters—children, really, only 10 or 11 years old—hanging around the parking lot? They didn't seem to be getting into trouble, but they didn't seem particularly happy either; they were just there. That scene is becoming more and more familiar: kids with parents at work, no one at home, no place to go; kids without supervision; kids growing up too fast. Latchkey kids.

Or perhaps you noticed the woman at work who was absent for most of the week, and when she did come in she seemed upset and unable to concentrate. Someone said her little girl was ill. The day care center wouldn't take her while she was sick; there was no one else to leave her with or stay with her. The woman's choice: stay home and skip work or leave the child home alone. A difficult choice; another all too familiar scene.

You've probably noticed problems such as these and others that affect children and families in your community. They are today's problems, and they exist in every city and town in every state in the country. But they can be remedied, and you can lead your community in taking action to overcome them.



Assembling a Task Force

Community action takes time, motivation, and energy. One person can accomplish a great deal, but several people working together can accomplish more and do it more quickly. A first step is to assemble a small task force of three or four friends or associates with concerns similar to yours who would be willing to work with you on behalf of the community's children.

Task force members can raise essential questions, suggest ideas, and provide a broad perspective. They can provide support and encouragement as you get the project under way. They can help you get started by becoming familiar with community efforts in child care, establishing good community relations, and identifying potential coalition members. They can also help you with the first big task: identifying trends and obtaining facts and opinions to back your ideas about what is needed for your community's children.

Determining Needs

A "needs assessment" is a fancy term for finding out what problems exist, what services are available to resolve them, and what services are needed. In this case, it means learning what types of child care or other services are available in your community to meet the needs you've identified and what additional programs or other types of services should be provided to fill the gaps. The needs assessment will give you the facts and opinions to back up your observations.

To get the facts, you'll need to ask questions. For example:

- What programs or services already exist in your community? Whom do they serve, where are they located, what hours do they operate, how much do they cost, and how effective are they?
- How many women with preschool children work outside the home? How many have

school-age children? How many are single parents? How many live at or below the poverty level?

- How many children are served by existing services? How many are not served because of lack of services? Lack of affordable services? Lack of conveniently located services? Other reasons?

- How do existing programs and services overlap? How do they meet current needs?

- What do community members—parents, employers, taxpayers, service providers—consider the most crucial issues in child care in your community?

You'll need to decide whom to survey. The list should include, among others:

- People in the community: parents, teachers, business operators

- Personnel of agencies and organizations: local government offices, public school officials, social service organizations, United Way agencies, civic groups, churches. (The telephone book is a good resource.)

- Child service providers: child care center directors, family day home operators, after-school program personnel

There are several ways to gather the information you're seeking:

- Talk to people, in person or by phone, and keep a log of the conversations. You might ask some leading questions, then let them talk about the problems as they see them. Keep a log of the conversations, and probably you will see that one theme or concern is expressed repeatedly. You may also find that different groups of people—for example, parents and city officials—see similar problems but from different perspectives.

- Conduct a survey. Draw up a list of questions that you want answered and send it to community decision makers, parents, and others. Perhaps you can distribute the survey at meetings or hand deliver it to organizations and offices to save mailing costs. Include a brief cover letter explaining the survey's purpose and a stamped, self-addressed envelope to encourage people to respond. Make sure that the questions are clear and that the survey is brief so that it won't discourage people from responding. And be sure to let the respondents know that you value their time and interest.

- Conduct an opinion poll. Ask individuals or groups their opinions about the problems and needs of children and families in your community. Keep a record of responses to see what percentage of the opinions agrees with yours.

You'll also want facts to back the opinions and ideas. You might want to include statistics on the population, such as number of children in various age groups, percentage of residents at different income levels, level of unemployment, and the like. It can be useful to gather facts about nearby communities or neighborhoods of comparable size and income level. There are several good sources:

- Local media: newspaper offices, radio and television stations
- Articles in newspapers and magazines. Read and clip feature stories, editorials, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor as well as news stories
- U.S. Census Bureau, Children's Defense Fund, other national fact-finding organizations
- Local public library, Chamber of Commerce, college or university
- State agency offices, such as the Texas Department of Human Services, Texas Department of Health, Texas Education Agency, Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, State Comptroller's Office, and Texas Department of Commerce/State Data Center. These are listed in the telephone directory.

- League of Women Voters, United Way, and other service organizations that have conducted local needs assessments
- Public officials: city, county, state, federal
- School system personnel

Different resources collect different data, and they tend to collect them in different ways. It can become confusing, yet each source can provide information that, when analyzed along with other data, should help clarify the picture. It is important to keep a record of the sources you use, the year each fact was obtained or reported, and the type of measurement used, such as number or percentage, age range reported on, ethnicity, etc. Otherwise, you may end up comparing toddlers and teenagers, if not apples and oranges.

When you've gathered all the information you need to make a good case for your project, write a summary report of what you've learned. State the problem, summarize the opinions of community residents, and list the major facts you've obtained. If the opinions and facts seem to support your initial idea, it is time to bring the community together to tackle the problem.

Forming a Coalition

A coalition is a group of organizations that join together to work for the same goal. They don't have to agree on everything; they just have to agree on the special issue that has brought them together.

Forming a coalition has a number of advantages. It helps people learn about your proposed project and develops support for your cause. It builds community interest and a sense of commitment to the community. It expands the ideas, the contacts, the resources, and the funds that can be gathered to help get your project under way. When the time and efforts of many groups and individuals are combined, the large task you are undertaking will not be quite so overwhelming.

Try to have as many local groups as possible represented in your coalition. Some quickly come to mind; others may not play an active role with children but nonetheless are interested in their welfare. You might consider representatives from these groups:

- community civic leaders
- business and industry
- local government (city, county, school district)
- local offices of health department, MHMR
- county extension service
- United Way and its affiliated child care agencies
- religious institutions
- social service and volunteer organizations
- youth programs (YMCA and YWCA, Scouts, Camp Fire, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.)
- labor unions
- law enforcement agencies
- physicians, attorneys, psychologists, therapists
- education service centers
- public school and local college or university personnel
- parents and neighbors
- preteens or teenagers, if you are planning a program for these age groups. Their ideas, and their support, can be invaluable.

Have you forgotten anyone who should be included? In addition to those who seem concerned about your community's children, don't overlook people or groups that might become interested if they could take part in the planning and become personally involved.

You may know the influential members of your community, the doers, and the major businesses and agencies. If you know them and have worked with them before, that will make your job easier. But in a large city, you may not know whom to contact to select members. If that's the case, you might start by calling the heads of agencies, organizations, and businesses. Explain the purpose of the coalition you are developing and ask them to suggest one of their members who might like to serve and would be an asset to your group.

Include leaders and decision-makers who can lend their knowledge and support and also include people who might be willing to give time and energy to help get the program started. When you contact these people, it's important to tell them what you will want from them. From some, you might want support in the form of letters of endorsement, presentations to organizations, use of their name in publicity, or funding. From others, you might want volunteer help in doing mailouts, arranging publicity, and working out details of meetings and programs. From all, you are likely to want ideas, suggestions, and encouragement.

A Helpful Hint

Building a coalition takes time. In fact, building good working relationships may take more time and effort than any other part of your project. Be patient. With guidance, groups that seem to have little in common can discover that they can be effective partners when they come together to solve a community problem. In the long run, your efforts will pay off in efficient and effective action and a stronger community.

Planning for Action

Setting Up an Organizational Meeting

Make the arrangements. Select a location and time for your first meeting and make the arrangements. Be sure the place is large enough to seat everyone, has microphones if needed for amplification, and, if possible, has adequate parking. Name tags are a good idea if the participants are not likely to know one another. If you can arrange to serve coffee or soft drinks as people assemble, they will have a chance to meet and visit, setting a positive tone for the meeting.

The person who chairs the meeting should be someone who enjoys speaking before large groups, is respected in the community, and, perhaps most important, is enthusiastic about the project. You might want to serve as temporary chair, or perhaps you'd rather have someone on your task force serve in that role. Often, the temporary chair is elected permanent chair.

Invite the participants. Send a letter to each of the representatives welcoming them as participants in your project and indicating where and when the initial meeting will be held. Let them know its purpose, how long it will last, and what you expect of the participants. They may ask who else is serving on the coalition. Be prepared to answer this and other questions concerning goals, activities, and commitment.

Prepare an agenda. You probably are well acquainted with the tasks that lead to a successful meeting. One is to prepare a written agenda—a list or outline of the topics to be covered. It is useful to set an estimated time by each item to make sure that everything of importance can be covered without causing the meeting to run overtime. An introductory meeting usually opens with a welcome, an introduction of guests and participants, and an explanation of the purpose of the meeting. Next might be a presentation of the facts and opinions obtained in the needs assessment, followed by a

discussion of the needs of young children, the services available, and the gaps that should be filled.

Plan time for participants to share their knowledge and perspectives on child care in your community. Solicit individual opinions and ideas. Help people become stakeholders by letting them have a share in the project. People need to feel that they are part of the action and that the forthcoming plans and activities will be a collaborative venture. Once they feel they are stakeholders, they can work together as a coordinated group to identify the key issues as they see them and plan the next steps.

Set up committees. More work is accomplished by small groups than by a coalition as a whole. At this initial meeting, small committees of one to four members can be formed to carry out specific tasks such as verifying information, investigating programs in other communities, looking into different aspects of the problem, or working with the media. They can then be prepared to report on their findings or accomplishments at the next meeting.

Be sure that participants understand their responsibilities, have a time line for carrying them out, and know whom to report to if they have questions and when they have completed their tasks.

Future meetings should include approval of the agenda and of the minutes, reports of the treasurer and committee heads, old business, and new business. A secretary should be appointed or elected to keep minutes and a treasurer to keep records of funds contributed and spent. Both are essential—minutes as an ongoing record of topics discussed, actions taken, and assignments made and completed; and account books as an accurate record of monies received and spent.

Some coalitions prefer to meet informally; others might want to incorporate and have a more formal structure. Some meet periodically, others at a regularly scheduled time. Your group can decide these arrangements to best suit your members. To encourage enthusiasm and attendance, discuss and tentatively schedule the time, place, and purpose of the second meeting before your first meeting adjourns.

Some Helpful Hints

1. The choice of a competent chairperson—one with a minimal amount of vested interest who is able to serve the interests of all the group's members—may be the key to the success or failure of your coalition. (1)

2. To maintain the active interest of coalition members, involve them as much as possible in planning, keep them informed, recognize their accomplishments, and offer them support.

Developing an Intervention Plan

The initial meetings will be devoted to getting the participants to work together to meet a goal. The chair's skill in keeping discussion focused on the issues at hand will help bring this about; so will committee work and other tasks which enable each participant to play a role. Only after the coalition decides upon a goal can they develop a strategy, or plan, for meeting that goal.

The goal should be stated clearly and briefly. For example, your goal might be "To start a high quality, affordable after-school program," or "To create a respite care program for families with handicapped children." The coalition will work more smoothly and the community will be more supportive if the goal is clearly understood.

Once goals and a strategy have been decided upon, there is an almost overwhelming number of details to handle. Among them:

- Set objectives for meeting the goal. Objectives are more specific than goals. For example, they might include: "to enroll 25 children ages 3 to 5," "to raise (dollars) in the next 90 days," or "to place two articles about the program in the local newspaper in the month before the program begins."
- Develop strategies for actions to meet the objectives
- Identify personnel to carry out the actions
- Draw up a timetable for accomplishing these actions.

In other words, decide what needs to be done, who will do it, and when.

Some Helpful Hints

1. Make good use of your community resources. Local civic groups such as the League of Women Voters or United Way may have data from needs assessments or other studies that will be of value to your group in planning. The newspaper representative on your coalition might be responsible for developing public awareness of the problem and handling publicity. The church representative could look into the possibility of obtaining space for a child care center in an area that is not used during the week by the church. Local businesses might serve as fundraisers for a program that would benefit their workers or plan to provide partial subsidy for child care as a way of improving employee attendance and retention. Include parents in your planning; they may have both talents and insights, and their ideas and support are essential.

2. Although there are committees to carry out tasks, usually most of the work is accomplished by a very few people. Be prepared for your initial task force—and you yourself—to carry out a majority of the tasks that need to be done.

Raising Funds

Fundraising is crucial to almost every project. In a small community, one or two individuals who are comfortable soliciting funds might be appointed to this task; in a big city, a committee could be set up to handle it. The basic sources of funds for nonprofit programs are voluntary civic organizations, individuals, foundations, and government, and each requires a different approach. These are some to consider:

- Local businesses, civic organizations, religious groups, and parent groups. Check with the Chamber of Commerce to learn what organizations are active in your area. You might use a direct mail or telephone campaign, or you might prefer meeting in person with the head of each organization.

- Members of your coalition. Some might want to give as individuals; others might talk to their organizations' administration about donating to the community cause.

- Foundations. Regional, state, and national foundations provide funds for public service programs. The *Foundation Directory*, which lists foundations and describes their policies and interests, is available at public and regional foundation libraries. Find out which foundations might be interested in your cause, inquire about their requirements, then submit a proposal to meet their specifications.

- State and federal agencies. Such Texas agencies as the Department of Human Services, Department of Health, and Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation often provide funding for human service programs. Call the local or state office to learn about what might be available. For programs that could be supportive at the national level, refer to *The Federal Register*, which should be available at the public library. As with foundations, to obtain public agency funds your group will be

required to write a proposal that meets specifications and deadlines and that competes favorably with other proposals submitted.

Writing Proposals

Proposal writing is an art in itself. It demands the research and writing skills that will convince readers of the importance of your project as well as explain its goals, personnel, and budget to those who review your application. There are some basic guidelines:

- Explain your program plans and capabilities in a way that meets the interests of the funding source.
- Be direct and be brief.
- Prepare a budget that is honest, as reasonable as possible, and cost-effective.
- Show community support through a list of coalition members, as well as citing both monetary and in-kind contributions.
- If a proposal format is available, follow it accurately and completely.
- Have task force members read the proposal for their perspectives and suggestions. Are corrections or additions needed? Does it sell them on the project?
- Prepare brief backup materials, such as a description of your community, an overview of your coalition, and letters of support from community leaders.
- When you mail your proposal to the prospective funding source, include a cover letter that briefly describes your organization and its goals and gives the name of the person to contact for further information.

Conducting Events

Auctions, receptions, concerts, and bazaars are among the many types of fundraisers that your organization might sponsor. When well-attended and successful, these can generate interest and good will as well as money. Be aware, though, that it takes much work and many person-hours to organize these events, from checking calendars to avoid conflict with other major events in town to arranging for cleaning up when it's all over.

In-kind contributions are something else to consider. Some organizations are unable to give money but can make an in-kind contribution. That is, they might offer assistance in the form of space for your program, secretarial help, a van for transporting children, or toys for your center.

Whatever your approach, your goal is the same: to convince the potential donor of the importance of your cause and the high quality of your program or planned activity. Be knowledgeable. You'll want to present your cause in the best light possible as well as be able to answer questions. Be aware also of the cost of different aspects of the program. Some donors prefer giving for something specific, such as playground equipment, rather than contributing to the program in general.

Give credit to the people and organizations that support your cause. In addition to sending a letter of thanks to your donors, you might acknowledge them in news releases, in brochures, and at annual meetings or other events. For special donors, you might present awards or certificates.

Some Helpful Hints

1. Don't be afraid to ask. Many organizations and businesses would prefer to give to programs within their own community. (2)

2. Fundraising is not a one-time activity. At first, funds are needed to get a program started. Later, they will be needed to maintain or possibly expand that program. To help your coalition obtain the funds it needs to operate a quality program, it might set up a standing fundraising committee, or it might have a different person responsible for fundraising each year. The important thing is to recognize that this is an ongoing task of virtually every nonprofit program.

3. As funds are contributed, be sure that someone is authorized to handle them. Appoint or elect a treasurer, open a bank account, and keep complete records.

Developing Public Awareness

Public awareness is a key ingredient for success. Before it can support your project, the community has to be aware of the problem and know what you plan to do about it. It is up to you and your coalition to get that information to them.

You will want to present information for different purposes—to inform, to create interest, and to develop support. For your group, this means developing public awareness about child care needs, informing the community about the creation of your coalition, and letting them know about the program you are developing. And you will want to reach the different groups who make up your community—parents, business and industry, educators, government agencies, professionals. Their concerns, and the ways to stir their interests, may differ considerably. This ongoing information program is called a public awareness or public relations program.

The newspaper comes to mind as the way to reach the most people. It is an effective way, but it is only one of several. Here are some "how to's" for getting information in the newspapers, as well as other types of publicity you might consider.

Newspapers

Press releases, feature articles, photo stories,and letters to the editor are cost-free ways the newspaper might spread the news about your program.

- *Press releases* are useful for announcing a new project or upcoming event, issuing a statement, or giving information. They should be limited to one page and should answer the journalist's questions of who, what, where, when, and why. Put the most important information in the first, or lead, paragraph. That way, if the paper cuts your story, at least the main points will still be included. Type the name and phone number of your group's contact person at the top of the page so the editor can call for further information.

  Be sure that your press releases are:
  - timely. A press release should reach a daily paper one to three days before you want it printed, with the date you want it released written at the top of the paper. Weeklies, however, often have earlier deadlines.
  - newsworthy. Names and action make news. Events that are going to take place are news; events that have already taken place generally are not.
  - accurate. Double check times, dates, and the spelling of people's names. Inaccurate information reflects badly on your entire project.
  - complete. Answer the "w" words: who, what, where, when, why.

- *Feature articles* and *photo stories* can be effective ways to get your community's attention. Try to get the interest of editors or reporters by letting them know, by letters followed by phone calls, about your exciting plans and inviting them to an event or one of your meetings. Children make good copy; you might stage an event that will include some of the youngsters your program will serve and invite the press to attend. Mentioning the names of influential members of your coalition won't hurt, either.

- *Letters to the editor* are another useful way of reaching the public. Read some in your paper to get an idea of how long they are and what they contain, then write one yourself. People read them, and their publication is almost guaranteed.

- *Advertisements.* Ads can be expensive, but sometimes a newspaper will give a lower price for a community public service program.

Radio and Television

Public service announcements (PSAs) and talk shows are the most common cost-free ways of getting publicity on radio or television.

- For *PSAs*, contact the station by phone or letter to learn its requirements (length, deadlines, etc.). Then write two or three brief spots—they usually are limited to 15, 20, or 30 seconds—that tell as much as possible in the short time scheduled. For television, you may need staff help in putting the spot together. Both radio and TV spots probably will be run at late night or early morning, but people tune in at these times, too.

- Some radio stations air *calendars of local events*. You might check into this and other local programs in your area.

- *Talk shows* can interest listeners and viewers in your program. Find out what is available in your area, then write to the channel or station to inquire about being a guest. Be prepared to tell the TV or radio host about the exciting and special aspects of your community's plans.

- *TV news programs* will report events that have news value. Children and animals are popular with viewers. If you have an upcoming event that might be newsworthy, contact your local TV station and suggest that a reporter or photographer might cover your activity.

Brochures, Posters, Flyers

Printed brochures, posters, and flyers are fairly inexpensive ways to gain public attention. They can use graphic art or photos and two or more colors to make them attractive. They can be designed and printed professionally, or talented members of your coalition might design them and have them photocopied, saving considerable expense. Before you prepare these, plan where and how you will post or distribute them.

Evaluating the Program

After your coalition has put forth all the time and effort necessary to begin a program, it would be easy to sit back and relax, confident that you have helped the community and its children. But have you? You can't really be sure unless you evaluate the results of your efforts. Evaluation is a way of finding out how well a program is working and whether it is meeting its goals.

Different types of evaluation serve different functions. A "normative" evaluation is an ongoing assessment of how a program is working on a daily basis. Is it easy or difficult to attract participants? Is there a high turnover in staff? Are the facilities well maintained, pleasant, and appropriate for the population served? Through questions such as these, a program can identify areas that need improvement and do something about them without waiting until the end of the year or the funding period.

A "summative" evaluation takes place at the end of a specified time period. Its purpose is to determine how well the program is meeting its goals and objectives. Did a latchkey program, for example, meet its goal to provide after-school care for 40 children in grades 1 through 6 by the end of the school year? Did the children served perform better in their academic programs as a result of after-school tutoring? The answers to such questions can make a difference in obtaining funds for program continuation.

Some tools of evaluation probably are included in the program's day-to-day operation; more formal evaluation can be conducted once or twice a year. Most assessments are "quantitative," that is, they are based on numbers and percents and can be measured and compared. They are commonly reported in graphs and tables in addition to a written text. Also important are "qualitative" evaluations. What do people think of the program, is it a "good" one, is the community better for having it? The answers to these questions are difficult to tabulate, but they can tell a great deal about a service program for children and their families.

Following are some basic and essential evaluation tools.

- Keep records. You should keep client records, such as attendance and use of facilities, as well as financial records, with a log of receipts and expenditures. By maintaining a monthly summary, you can keep abreast of trends or problems as well as save considerable time at the end of each year.

- Survey the participants: youngsters and their parents. On a periodic basis—perhaps every six months or at the end of each school year—get the opinions of program participants, if they are of school age, and their parents. Ask them to complete a brief questionnaire designed to indicate their satisfaction with the program, their interest in continuing participation, the aspects of the project they like best and least, and an open-ended question in which they can express their concerns as well as their ideas.

- Survey the staff. Get their opinions on the success of the program, any problems that they have encountered, and their suggestions for improvement.

- Analyze the data obtained to learn if the program is meeting the goals. Is it reaching the children it was designed to serve? Does it have a waiting list? Are parents of the participants pleased? Is it financially stable? You will be able to think of other questions that relate to your program. A positive evaluation, written into a short report, can be valuable to use when you are seeking additional funds for continuing or expanding your program. It is essential for enabling you to run a quality program.

Some Helpful Hints

Coalitions and programs learn from their experiences. And while each community must experience some things on its own, it can also benefit from the learning of others. In its book, *Children, Families and Cities* (3), the National League of Cities identified 12 specific conclusions drawn from the successful local-level programs they studied, providing lessons that can be useful to every community contemplating developing a program for its own children and families. Following are the lessons, or hints, that you, too, might find useful.

1. *Leadership is crucial.* Successful projects have effective leaders, but all leaders are not alike. One leader may have strength as an administrator; others may have political clout, financial backing, organizing ability, advocacy skills, or humanitarian passion. Try to recognize and encourage leadership ability.

2. *Reliable facts are needed.* To help establish effective leadership as well as to support program development, you must have vital and accurate facts about a community, its needs, and the potential program. As Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, pointed out in *Families in Peril*, "good fact-finding coupled with good analysis is essential. . . misleading facts can discredit a leader and a cause."

3. *Public-private partnerships or collaborations add strength.* By working together, the public and private sectors can command greater support from more segments of the community than either could accomplish alone. Furthermore, they can minimize barriers, or "turfism," that might arise between different groups. They also can provide complementary support. In some programs, for example, a local government agency might provide the services and a foundation provide the funds; in others, public and private organizations might share ideas and activities. The result of working together is often more than the sum of the parts.

4. *Institutionalization is useful.* It is particularly important if a worthwhile project is to continue beyond a particular policymaker's term of office or a leader's tenure. Institutionalization can be informal, based on an unofficial networking among service agencies and the gradual development of a sense of history of the project. A community then becomes "known" as one that serves its children or elderly well, a reputation that encourages program continuation. Institutionalization also can be formal, setting policy on behalf of children and families, for example, or passing zoning or building codes that encourage the creation of child care facilities or a child care office in the city government.

5. *Services must be coordinated.* Problems rarely are simple. More often, one leads to another and they multiply and overlap. Teen parents, for example, not only face the problem of early parenthood but often face problems of child care, unemployment, lack of schooling, and poverty, as well. Rather than try to remedy these problems individually, a community could better serve its teens by coordinating service agencies and private resources to tackle problems comprehensively.

6. *Visibility helps develop support.* Let people know about the positive things that are being done for children and families. By publicly acknowledging all segments of the community that are working on the project, you can build community identification with the effort and help assure its continuation. This also helps the entire community develop a positive image, both at home and in other towns or neighborhoods.

7. *Communities can be important in policy making.* One local policy maker may not have much influence at the state or national level. Officials working together, however, can be influential, especially when they can back their perspective with solid data about their community's children and families, their needs, and their services. A coordinated community can gain broader support than an individual agency or organization.

8. *Schools play a crucial role.* As traditional centers for the development of children and youth, schools play an integral role in the lives of most youngsters. Whether or not a program is school-related, it is important to work cooperatively with the school system and to coordinate services in the best interests of the children served.

9. *Evaluation is important for program accountability.* Evaluation can be as simple as compiling numbers and asking questions, but whatever its method, it must be used to examine the process of delivering services as well as to analyze the results. Periodic or ongoing evaluation helps a program correct mistakes and improve service delivery midcourse. It is important to know not only whether a program worked, but also whom it worked for, how it worked, and what its problems were as well as its successes. It is also important to recognize that some goals cannot be evaluated immediately. Preschool programs may prove immediately effective on some levels, but their effectiveness in helping participants graduate from high school cannot be assessed until an appropriate number of years has passed. If accurate records aren't maintained, the value of such programs never can be learned.

10. *Consider the policy approach.* Policies that support children and families encourage the development of comprehensive services.

11. *Policies should have a component that refers to children and families.* Building and zoning codes, for example, can be written to include child care and playground requirements or contain other considerations that impact children and families.

12. *Prevention is a vital element in planning children's services.* The results of prevention programs aren't as visible as the results of corrective or intervention programs. They are vital, however, for improving the lives of children and families, and they are cost-effective. Today's pregnant teenagers, families in poverty, and infants receiving

inadequate care need help. Beyond that, it is less costly in both human and monetary resources to reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy, help families move out of poverty, and provide developmental care for infants so that these problems will not continue to plague our society.

A basic lesson was learned by the National League of Cities in its study of local programs that work: "All city leaders—elected, appointed, or just in the right place at the right time—can convene, broker, leverage, and join in partnerships to see to it that the needs of chidren and families are met. . . . After all, our cities and our children are at stake."

Program Models

Communities throughout Texas are bringing their public and private sectors together on behalf of children and their families. Agencies are learning that, by coordinating and cooperating with other agencies and organizations, they can provide better services for a greater number of youngsters. The children, their families, and the entire community benefit.

Following are descriptions of some model community projects in Texas. Some address broad community needs for children and families; others focus on specific issues. Each is an example of how patience, hard work, and a willingness to put individual interests and differences aside can make a difference in a community. These programs may give you some ideas and encouragement for your community.

San Antonio CARES

In 1972, a San Antonio volunteer worker grew increasingly concerned about the abused children she worked with at a local shelter. Her concern led to the development of WAIF (Women Aiding Infants and Families), a group actually composed of both men and women she spoke to who became interested in working with her to alert the community to the problem of child abuse.

Their first step was to contact many organizations throughout the city. The next step was to form a task force representing interested organizations, and the next, to find a sponsor. The task force was given two assignments: to study the problem and to decide what the community could do to remedy it. One year later it reported its recommendations to its sponsoring agency, the Community Welfare Council.

With the report, the task force had completed its specific duties. But there was still much work to do. Therefore, it recommended that it be disbanded and reformed as a citizen's action group, the San Antonio Child Abuse Council.

The Council was created in 1973, with a membership that represented the many local organizations that deal in some way with child abuse. These included the Bexar County Child Welfare Department, the University of Texas Medical School, physicians from local military bases as well as from the community, the Coordinated Child Care Council, the Police Department, Community Guidance Center, Family Services Association, the media, WAIF, the District Attorney's office, and other medical, legal, and social agencies.

The Council has been active since 1973. It has met its goals through a number of activities, among them a crisis hotline for parents, foster grandparents program, conferences and forums on child abuse, public awareness materials, a teenage parent network, seminars for working parents, and training workshops for child care providers.

San Antonio CARES has become a vital community organization. On the basis of its initial accomplishments, it has expanded and reorganized. In 1978 it became incorporated as the San Antonio Coalition for Children, Youth and Families; in 1986, as San Antonio CARES. Since 1982 it has been a chapter of the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse.

The executive director sees the program's greatest strength as involving community leaders, service providers, and volunteers, bringing them together to identify service needs and to coordinate existing efforts or develop new programs to respond to these needs. The director has served since the beginning and has played a significant leadership role in the program's success.

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Child Care Partnership of Dallas

In 1983 the mayor of Dallas made a pronouncement: "Dallas shall be a model for the advocacy of excellence in the care of our children."

To bring this about, he appointed a task force to study child-related issues and make recommendations for the quality care of Dallas area children. Serving on the task force were some 70 Dallas residents including pediatricians, parents, attorneys, bankers, school board members, human service workers, and child care providers.

This volunteer task force met for nine months, and in Spring 1984 it made its recommendations to the mayor. The first recommendation was that Dallas needed an independent advocacy organization for children. This led to the creation of Child Care Partnership of Dallas, which was then designated to carry out the other recommendations.

The task force, having completed its mandate when it presented its recommendations, then disbanded. A few of its members stayed on, however, serving on a transition team to help develop the partnership, and some were appointed to serve on its board of directors.

Quality day care was seen as a top priority by the task force and is the primary goal of Child Care Partnership. To develop it, the partnership promotes a voluntary accreditation program based on the standards set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Activities include organizing, in cooperation with the local AEYC, child care training programs and workshops that lead to accreditation and providing scholarships for child care teachers. The result: Dallas has 44 accredited day care centers, more than any other city in the country; and 87 other centers are working for accreditation.

Other accomplishments include:

- An accreditation program for family day homes, based on Child Development Associate (CDA) requirements, with 10 accredited and 40 in process.
- Child Care Answers, a resource and referral service operated in conjunction with Child Care Dallas and run primarily by volunteers. The service is available to the public, is free to parents for the first search, and provides information on how to evaluate child care as well as on what is available.
- Fundraising and resource development to provide scholarships, accreditation incentives, and services.
- Advocacy for children at the city, state, and federal level.
- Public awareness via the media and presentations to educate corporations, parents, and the community at large on the importance of quality child care.

A major event is hosted each year to call the public's attention to the group's activities. A strong public awareness program, the ability to attract city leaders to the board of directors, and the successful record

over the years have enabled the Child Care Partnership to become a key force in Dallas for quality child care.

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Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Program–Fort Worth

In the early 1980s, the Fort Worth Independent School District became alarmed by the increasing number of students dropping out of school due to pregnancy. The educators recognized that this was a problem not just of education but of the community, and it needed community resources to help solve it. To involve the community, the Fort Worth ISD formed the Adolescent Pregnancy Advisory Committee, a diverse group of citizens who represented the schools, the health professions, local businesses, and civic and volunteer groups. The committee's mandate: to conduct a six-month study to learn the facts about Fort Worth's teenage pregnancy problem.

The facts confirmed the school personnel's suspicions, among them: one in five births in Fort Worth each year is to a teenager; 13 percent of teenage girls become pregnant each year; approximately half of all families receiving public assistance are headed by teen mothers. Based on what they learned, the committee recommended an action plan to be conducted cooperatively by the Fort Worth ISD and the Tarrant County Hospital District. They further recommended that a citizen's group be formed to oversee the program's implementation. For this purpose, the Fort Worth Adolescent Pregnancy Board (FWAPB) was created.

The plan, implemented in 1984, includes some model programs:

- The New Lives Program is an alternative school serving pregnant and parenting teens in grades 6 through 12. In addition to schooling, it brings to the campus the WIC program (the federally funded Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children), twice weekly medical programs, immunizations, social services, the car seat safety program, and an adopt-a-school volunteer program which provides layettes as well as tutoring and support.
- Day care centers are provided at the New Lives School and at a central city high school. They provide parenting education and a child development program in addition to enabling young mothers to continue their schooling.
- A human growth and sexuality program is offered in the public schools to sixth graders.
- Community awareness is promoted through a slide presentation on teen pregnancy and a speakers bureau available to local organizations.

Members of the FWAPB include administrators of the local office of the public health service, the Gladney Home, the county hospital, and the school district as well as concerned citizens. Their work didn't end with a needs assessment and recommendations. In addition to overseeing the program, they speak to church groups and clubs about it, raise funds for it, and convince decision makers about its importance. They are well organized, presenting a knowledgeable and united front to school boards and others to whom they present the case for new or expanded programs, and they do their homework, gathering statistics to keep their information current.

A strategic move was the appointment of a coordinator to serve as a liaison between the school system and the FWAPB. She helps assure the coordination and cooperation of the many groups, both professional and volunteer, involved in running the adolescent pregnancy programs.

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Houston Committee for Private Sector Initiatives

The Houston Committee for Private Sector Initiatives (PSI) was formed in 1982 to encourage the private sector to take a more active role in addressing local problems. To do this, it sought to bring a broad group of community leaders and service providers together to identify issues, develop public/private coalitions, and provide ideas for solutions. One of the four areas selected to address was child care.

The child care effort began in 1984. The first public/private collaboration was in the staff—one from PSI, one an aide "on loan" from the mayor's office. Together, over a four-year period they directed the following sequence of activities.

The first year, to raise the awareness of child care issues among leaders in both the public and private sectors, PSI and the mayor's office co-sponsored a Mayor's Hearing on Children and Youth, a public forum that focused on all children and youth from birth to 14 and the delivery systems that affect them. Committees of 40 to 50 members were formed to identify the major issues in each system area—education, health, employment and training, child abuse and neglect, juvenile justice, child care, mental health, and recreation. Each committee was composed of a diverse group of people who worked within the given system and who worked with children—in health, for example, physicians, public health nurses, community health workers, etc.—but for the most part had never worked together or known what others were doing to serve the same population.

Each committee worked for six months, putting together a panel for the hearing. By working together, committee members learned what other providers were doing, began to develop networks, and raised their interest, awareness, and knowledge of the needs of Houston children.

The second year, the Mayor's Hearing focused on children by age group—preschool, elementary school, and teenage—and how the delivery systems impact these groups. PSI published a short booklet to summarize this hearing and document its strongest message: the need for more school-age, or latchkey, child care.

In response to the earlier hearings, the theme for the third year Mayor's Hearing was "The Unsupervised Child." PSI formed an advisory committee composed of the mayor, school superintendent, chief executive officers of businesses and corporations, ministers, and directors of city agencies, and at the hearing these city leaders made a public commitment to Houston's children, speaking about what they could and would do for unsupervised youngsters. In addition, more than 100 experts volunteered their time to help write *After-School Special—A Solution for Houston's Children*, a definitive book on how to plan, develop, and implement quality programs for unsupervised children.

The efforts of the first three years led to the development of the Child Care Resource & Referral program (CCR&R), which helps locate appropriate child care for working parents. It also led, in 1987, to the After-School Partnership, which sponsors school-based after-school programs that are a model of collaboration among schools, families, the community, and the private sector. The Houston ISD provides facilities, leadership by school principals, and the services of a certified teacher at each site; corporate participants sponsor schools by providing monetary and technical support, equipment and materials, and volunteer help; nonprofit agencies—YMCA, YWCA, Wesley Community Center, Camp Fire, Inc., and Child Care Council for Greater Houston—operate the programs under contract; and parents pay sliding scale fees that enable low-income families to participate.

PSI continues to run the After-School Partnership and is active in its other targeted areas—employment and training, housing and neighborhood revitalization, and the Loaned Executive Program. Its programs for younger children, however, have been spun off to a new service organization, Initiatives for Children.

Started in 1987, Initiatives is responsible for the Child Care Resource & Referral program, the Family Day Home Accreditation Program, and a public awareness effort that provides seminars for the business community. By spinning off established services, PSI can devote time to new needs and efforts.

Several factors led to the success of PSI's child care effort: (1) providing ample study and planning time before starting a service program; (2) bringing people together who didn't know what others in their field were doing, enabling them to learn, to get energy from one another, and to develop their own networks; (3) giving people a task to do together in which they each had a stake; and (4) publishing something at the end of the second and third years so that participants could see what they had accomplished. Another significant factor was the skill and dedication of the initial staff who were responsible for the child care program's first four years.

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Programming to Meet Community Needs–County Extension Office, Kerr County

County Extension Agents, who serve in each of Texas' 254 counties as part of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service of Texas A&M University, are experienced in bringing people and resources together on behalf of their communities. Kerr County is the location of one model example.

In 1985, faced with increasing needs but no increasing resources, the extension agent called together a small group of associates—persons she knew and had worked with in the community—to suggest a cross-section of leaders from throughout the county who might identify critical issues. From the group identified, 40 were invited to serve on County Long Range Extension Program Planning Committees which plan and implement issue-based programming, some of which focuses on the community's children.

The group concerned with children was convened in 1986. It included representatives of the business community, health and human service agencies, civic groups, the judicial and law enforcement systems, the schools, and parents. And, without shortcuts or haste, the members went through each of the steps needed in order that people with different motivations and perspectives might work together on behalf of their children and families. First, they discussed issues with which they were concerned. Next, they identified the primary human service problems in their rural county. Then, they decided upon actions they needed to take over the next five years to help overcome these problems. Following the discussions and decision-making, members of this volunteer committee formed small groups to get the selected actions or projects started. To ensure the success of these projects, they enlisted the support of a diverse group of community resources.

- A resource manual was developed and published listing every agency in the county that served children and families. The manual was written

by professionals; but for addressing, envelope stuffing, and mailing, the committee made arrangements with a home for unwed mothers, where the girls volunteered to help with the manual in exchange for participating in parenting classes taught by the extension agent. The collaboration served everyone well: the girls learned skills and responsibility and got a boost in self-esteem from their successful effort—and the books got mailed.

- Parenting classes were set up to meet a critical need. Recognizing, however, that it can be difficult to entice parents to attend classes, committee members sought the support of the courts and the school system. Once convinced of the value of these classes, judges began mandating that parents coming through the courts for delinquent children, child abuse, or divorce attend the ten-week series of classes; and the schools firmly suggested that parents of disruptive youngsters attend before their children got into more serious trouble. Volunteers were trained to teach the classes, which are based on a national program that teaches skills for effective parenting. With the support of the courts, three or four classes per week maintain full attendance; with the interest and support of the community, there is a continuing waiting list of volunteers who would like to teach a class.

By networking with the key people and groups in their community—as well as involving the young people themselves—the Kerr County Planning Committee also has started programs for drug abuse and money management and was instrumental in passing a clean air ordinance that outlaws smoking in public buildings and athletic stadiums. Beyond that, it has trained community members to become leaders to carry on the programs that it initiates so that the committee can start other needed projects.

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Child Abuse Prevention Network–Wichita Falls County

In 1985 the directors of three groups in Wichita Falls—the Battered Women's Shelter, the YWCA, and FOCAS, the advocacy organization for children going through the court system—met together to share some mutual concerns. Their primary goals were to obtain funding and improve services for child abuse victims and their families.

The first step was to write a proposal to the Children's Trust Fund. Community support was indicated in the proposal: in-kind contributions in the form of office space and copying equipment from the YWCA, willingness to serve on the board of directors by the three persons initiating the network, and ten percent matching funds by Wichita Falls County. The proposal was approved for funding.

The next step was to involve the local agencies that dealt with children. Representatives were recruited from 17 organizations, a diverse group that included youth organizations such as Big Brothers-Big Sisters and Boy Scouts, government agencies such as Child Protective Services and the Juvenile Probation Department, and others such as Parents Anonymous, Junior League, Independent Order of Foresters, a civic group from Shepherd Air Force Base, and North Texas Easter Seals.

The network focuses on public awareness. Activities include an annual film series on local cable TV during Child Abuse Prevention Week; lists sent to schools throughout the district outlining free help available in the community; a small library of books and videos housed at the Mental Health Association; and the distribution of Spiderman comics, with child abuse prevention information in comic book format, to all fifth graders in the district. The goal is to have a continuing public awareness program to help prevent child abuse as well as to encourage people to report such abuse when it does occur so that help can be provided.

Its other primary activity is to enable service providers to share information with one another at

monthly meetings. This helps them keep abreast of what is being done for children and families, what works best, and what is needed. Minutes are sent immediately after the meetings to inform members who were unable to attend, and the single staff member keeps in touch with all members by phone in order to maintain their interest and support.

The network was set up for one year, but it has continued because of its value to both member organizations and the community at large. It has received continuation funding twice, each time matched by an increasing percentage of funds from the county. Now it is working to obtain full funding locally; if it does not receive that financial support, the network plans to continue as a totally volunteer organization.

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A Community Wish List

Have you ever made a "wish list?" Most of us have, letting our imaginations take flight as we dream of things we'd like to have or do, exciting and wonderful things that seem far beyond our reach. And sometimes, if we work and plan and persevere, we see a wish come true.

But have you ever thought of a community wish list—one that would include all of the things that you would like to see take place to improve the lives of children and families in your community? You might be surprised to find that many of these wishes are within your reach, just waiting for you and your fellow citizens to grasp them and put them in place.

Create a wish list for your community. Dream on; then begin the action to make at least one of them come true. The random list that follows might help you get started.

- Establish affordable child care for infants
- Develop a child care program for children with special needs, such as the handicapped or the emotionally disturbed
- Provide family day care for children of the homeless
- Create a child care coordinator position for your city
- Investigate child care for downtown and industrial areas
- Develop policies to improve city facilities that are important to children and families, such as libraries, parks, and nature trails
- Get zoning laws changed to encourage family day care
- Coordinate mental health services for children
- Provide training and technical assistance for child care providers
- Encourage local employers to provide employee child care options
- Advocate for children and youth
- Organize a health fair or other community event on behalf of children and families
- Interest the newspaper in publicizing children's needs and services

- Start a "friendly neighborhood" program, with signs in home and store windows indicating where children can go for help
- Help the library acquire books on child development
- Start a community education program on parenting
- Develop a respite care program for parents of children with disabilities
- Develop a community plan of action for children's services
- Provide incentives to builders to incorporate space for child care
- Conduct parent workshops
- Require developers to set aside a specified percentage of space for parks and recreational facilities
- Develop an after-school care program in neighborhood schools
- Stimulate subsidies to help families meet child care costs

References

1. *Challenge for Community Action.* New York: National Council of Jewish Women, 1988.

2. *After-School Special: Solutions for Houston's Children.* June Ferrill and Kathleen McNemar Rowland, Eds. Houston: Houston Committee for Private Sector Initiatives, 1987.

3. *Children, Families & Cities.* John E. Kyle, Ed. Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities, 1987.

Resources

State Agencies and Organizations–The following state agencies and organizations have local, county, or regional offices that may be able to provide you with facts, information, and help. Most are listed by county or city name in your local telephone directories under the general listing in small cities and towns, the business section in middle-size cities, and the blue pages in large cities.

- Association for the Education of Young Children
- Corporate Child Development Fund (512/440-8555)
- County Agricultural Extension Agent
- Education Service Center–(The Yellow Pages: Education Associations)
- Texas Child Care Clearinghouse, Texas Employment Commission–(512/463-2973)
- Texas Education Agency
- Texas Department of Health
- Texas Department of Human Services
- Texas Department of Mental Health/Mental Retardation
- United Way

Libraries–Your local library is an excellent source of information. For suggestions for funding, the following should be available and useful:

- *The Foundation Directory*
  The Foundation Center, New York (published semi-annually)
- *The Hooper Directory of Texas Foundations*
  Funding Information Center of Texas, Inc., 507 Brooklyn, San Antonio, TX 78215 (published semi-annually)
- *The Taft Corporate Giving Directory*
  The Taft Group, 5130 MacArthur Blvd, N.W., Washington D.C. 20016

Regional foundation libraries have additional source books and periodicals that might be useful. To locate the one nearest you, call 1-800-424-9836.


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